

Message Text

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S E C R E T CAIRO 13430

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR EG FR LE
SUBJ: FAHMY ON LEBANESE SITUATION

SUMMARY: FAHMY STATES THAT, ALTHOUGH SADAT HAS RECENTLY PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY INDICATED SUPPORT FRO SARKIS, GOE CURRENTLY DISPLEASED WITH LEBANESE PRESIDENT'S FAILURE TO STOP SYRIANS FROM UNDERTAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST PLO IN THE METN, WHICH IT BELIEVES HE COULD HAVE DONE. GOE SENDING SARKIS "STRONG MESSAGE" THAT IT EXPECTS HIM TO ACT IN GENUINELY NEUTRAL FASHION. FAHMY BELIEVES PROSPECTS OF EARLY MINI-SUMMIT STILL REGARDED AS REASONABLE. SYRIANS HAVE ALLEGEDLY AGREED THAT SARKIS MAY ATTEND, BUT ISSUE OF ARAFAT'S PARTICIPATION STILL UNDER DISCUSSION. IF SYRIANS REMAIN NEGATIVE ON THIS POINT, GOE WILL "BLOW UP" FULL SUMMIT CONFERENCE. GISCARD REPORTEDLY READY TO ASSIST IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE, PROVIDED ALL LEBANESE PARTIES AGREE AND A "PROGRAM" GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO ALL PARTIES HAS BEEN ARRANGED IN ADVANCE. FAHMY THOUGHT IT BEST IF USG STAYS OUT SINCE, RIGHTLY OR WRONG, IT IS REGARDED BY MANY ARABS AS PARTISAN AND ANTI-PLO. END SUMMARY.

1. MET WITH FAHMY TODAY FOR FIRST TIME SINCE MY RETURN FROM US LAST SATURDAY. HE HAD RETURNED FROM
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PARIS LAST SATURDAY. HIS PRINCIPAL CONCERN CONTINUES

TO BE LEBANESE SITUATION.

2. FAHMY NOTED THAT,DURING SARKIS'S VISIT TO CAIRO SEVERAL WEEKS AGO (CAIRO'S 12925), SADAT HAD PUBLICLY STATED HIS SUPPORT FOR THE NEW LEBANESE PRESIDENT. GOE READINESS TO EXTEND SUPPORT HAD ALSO BEEN CONVEYED TO SARKIS PRIVATELY,BUT GOE ALSO INDICATED IT EXPECTED HIM TO ACT IN POSITIVE AND NEUTRAL FASHION IN SEEKING TO BRING ALL THE PARTIES, INCLUDING THE PLO, TOGETHER. GOE IS CURRENTLY DISPLEASED WITH SARKIS' FAILURE TO STOP SYRIANS FROM UNDERTAKING MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE PLO IN THE METN. IN GOE VIEW, SARKIS COULD HAVE DONE SO HAD HE WISHED. HE WAS FULLY AWARE OF ARAFAT'S OFFER DURING THE CHTOURA MEETING TO WITHDRAW IF ARAB LEAGUE RATHER THAN SYRIAN FORCES REPLACED PALESTINIAN FORCES. GOE IS TODAY SENDING SARKIS A "STRONG MESSAGE" IN ORDER TO EMPHASIZE TO THE NEW LEBANESE PRESIDENT THAT IT EXPECTS HIM NOT TO ACT AS A SYRIAN PUPPET BUT IN GENUINE NEUTRAL FASHION. SARKIS, FAHMY STRESSED, HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD THE PLO AS DO OTHER ARAB LEADERS.

3. INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, FAHMY THOUGHT THAT PROSPECTS FOR A MINI-SUMMIT TO BE CONVENED IN THE NEXT WEEK OR SO REMAIN REASONABLE. THE SAUDIS ARE CONTINUING TO WORK ON IT. HE RECALLED THAT SYRIANS HAD OBJECTED TO SADAT'S IDEA THAT IT BE A SIX MEMBER CONFERENCE, INCLUDING SARKIS AND ARAFAT. GOE POSITION BASED ON CONVICTION THAT LEBANON CAN ONLY BE MEANINGFULLY DISCUSSED WITH SARKIS AND ARAFAT PRESENT. OTHERWISE SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD SIMPLY DEGENERATE INTO NEW SYRIAN ATTACKS ON SINAI II. SYRIANS, ACCORDING TO FAHMY, HAVE NOW AGREED THAT SARKIS MAY ATTEND. OUT- STANDING ISSUE REMAINS ARAFAT'S PARTICIPATION (AND, ALTHOUGH FAHMY DID NOT SPECIFICALLY SAY SO, PROBABLY AGENDA). DURING KAMAL ADHAM'S RECENT VISIT, SADAT HAD AGAIN IMPRESSED UPON THE SAUDIS THAT ARAFAT MUST ALSO ATTEND SUCH A CONFERENCE. FAHMY IS UNDER THE IMPRESSSION THAT THE SAUDIS ARE NOW TRYING TO FIND A FORMULA ACCEPTABLE TO THE SYRIANS WHEREBY ARAFAT ALSO

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PARTICIPATES. HE HOPES A REPLY MAY BE RECEIVED IN THE NEXT DAY OR SO. IF THE SYRIAN REPLY IS NEGATIVE, GOE WILL "BLOW UP" THE FULL SUMMIT CONFERENCE NOW SCHEDULED FOR OCT 18 ON GROUNDS THAT WITHOUT ADEQUATE ADVANCE PLANNING NO SUCH SUMMIT CAN HOPE TO SUCCEED.

4. ASKED ABOUT HIS RECENT TALKS WITH THE FRENCH ON LEBANON,FAHMY WAS SOMEWHAT EVASIVE. HE CLAIMED

PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HAD EXPRESSED FRANCE'S READINESS TO ASSIST IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE, BUT WITH IMPORTANT PROVISIO THAT ALL OF THE LEBANESE PARTIES AGREE. BEFORE COMMITTING FRENCH PRESTIGE, GISCARD HAD INSISTED THAT THE ARAB PARTIES TO THE DISPUTE "DRAW UP A PROGRAM," GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TO THEM AND WHICH MIGHT BE PROMOTED THROUGH FRENCH PARTICIPATION. FAHMY THOUGHT FRENCH POSITION WAS REASONABLE AND HOPED THAT A MINI-SUMMIT, IF ONE TAKES PLACE, MIGHT DRAW UP SUCH A "PROGRAM" WHICH COULD BE ENDORSED BY A FULL SUMMIT. HE WAS EQUIVOCAL ON THE MATTER OF FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN THE LEBANESE PEACEKEEPING EFFORT. HE ALSO OBSERVED THAT HE THOUGHT THE USG HAD VERY LITTLE TO OFFER IN FURTHERING PEACE PROSPECTS IN LEBANON AND THAT IT IS BEST TO KEEP USG OUT. RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, USG IS REGARDED BY MANY ARABS AS PARTISAN AND ANTI-PLO. HENCE ANY USG PARTICIPATION AT ONCE BECOMES SUSPECT.

5. COMMENT: FAHMY'S VIEW THAT A MINI-SUMMIT MAY STILL TAKE PLACE BEFORE LONG RUNS COUNTER TO WHAT WE UNDERSTAND WAS NEGATIVE REACTION OF SAUDI NEGOTIATOR KAMAL ADHAM TO SADAT'S INSISTANCE THAT BOTH SARKIS AND ARAFAT PARTICIPATE. HIS STATEMENT ON GISCARD'S VIEWS GIVES RISE TO SUSPICION THAT FRENCH POSITION HAS NOT APPRECIABLY CHANGED FROM TIME EARLIER GOE OVERTURES WERE MADE. BIG STUMBLING BLOCK REMAINS ALL IMPORTANT PROVISIO THAT ALL LEBANESE PARTIES MUST AGREE. AS FAHMY HIMSELF ADMITTED, IF THERE IS SUCH COMPLETE AGREEMENT BY LEBANESE PARTIES, THERE IS NO NEED FOR FRENCH ASSISTANCE, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGHT MARONITES AND PERHAPS THE SYRIANS ARE RECEPTIVE TO FRENCH COUNSEL OF RESTRAINT.

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6. IN STATEMENT MADE IN PARIS OCT 3, AND PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S CAIRO PRESS, FAHMY AFFIRMED THAT HIS TALKS IN PARIS CONCENTRATED ON TWO POINTS:

(A) TO WHAT EXTENT FRANCE CAN PARTICIPATE IN SAFE-GUARDING SECURITY IN LEBANON THROUGH SOME KIND OF PRESENCE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL LEBANESE PARTIES. SUCH PRESENCE SHOULD NOT CONFLICT, HOWEVER, WITH ROLE OF ARAB PEACEKEEPING FORCE NOW IN LEBANON. (B) TO WHAT EXTENT FRANCE IS READY TO CREATE SUITABLE ATMOSPHERE FOR A ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE TO BE ATTENDED BY ALL DISPUTING PARTIES. ALTHOUGH FAHMY TOLD PRESS THERE IS COMPLETE AGREEMENT BETWEEN SADAT AND GISCARD ON LEBANON, HE SHIED AWAY FROM COMMENTING ON SPECIFIC RESULTS, IF ANY, OF HIS MISSION TO PARIS.

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